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HARVEST IN ITALY.

A POET of the sixteenth century has left us a pretty song, supposed to be sung by a girl to her companions as she is winnowing corn. It is such a character that the artist has portrayed in the lovely picture from which our engraving is taken. As we gaze upon her beautiful features and graceful form, it is easy to fancy her fanning the flame of her admirer's affection by singing, in merry mood, snatches of some popular ballad to a well-known air. But, if we may believe the accounts given of an Italian harvest by well-informed and trustworthy travellers, there is nothing in that country corresponding to this pleasing illusion. It is true, the poor

in troops of several hundreds, each under the command of a sort of corporal, armed with a staff, they present almost the appearance of an army. If a poor girl, exhausted by fatigue, panting, and fainting with thirst, rests for a moment, she is immediately goaded on to work by some harsh word, some threatening movement of the corporal's staff, or even a blow from his brutal hand. A melancholy silence pervades this laborious multitude. Nothing is heard but the sound of the sickle as it cuts, and the corn as it falls. The sickles and billhooks glitter in the sun like weapons of war, and, to complete the comparison, death reigns among the reapers as on the



AN ITALIAN WINNOWER.

girls who, with their brothers and their betrothed lovers, go down from the Abruzzi, and the mountains of Lucca, and the Sabine district, to get in the harvest about Rome, are not unfrequently as beautiful as the one depicted in our engraving; but they are rarely cheerful enough to give vent to their feelings in songs. It is not on their father's fields that they reap the corn, bind the sheaves, and winnow the grain. For a miserable pittance of hire they go, much against their inclination, to expose themselves to the malignant influence of the atmosphere, and work laboriously for several months under very strict discipline. As they move along the vast plains

field of battle. "Exposed," says a traveller, "to severe toil, passing speedily without transition from the temperate climate and pure air of their mountains to a burning plain which sends forth pestilential miasma, these unhappy creatures are often the victims of dreadful fevers. The season of harvest is most dangerous. The mortality is then sometimes frightful, and it is not uncommon to see ten or a dozen victims carried every evening from the fields to the hospital, their sufferings being aggravated by the coldness of the night and the hardness of the vehicle in which they are conveyed."